Baptist Bible College & Graduate School

CO574 – Solving Marriage Problems 1

Solving Marriage Problems

By Dr. Dow Pursley

Divorce Rate

1st marriages-50%

2nd marriages-60%

3rd marriages-80%

4th marriages-90%+

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) -- Baptists have the highest divorce rate of any Christian denomination, and are more likely to get a divorce than atheists and agnostics, according to a national survey.

The survey conducted by Barna Research Group in Ventura, Calif., found that 29 percent of all adult Baptists have been through a divorce.

Twenty seven percent of those describing themselves as born-again Christians are currently or have previously been divorced, compared to 24 percent among other adults.
(Barna Research)

Of major Christian denominations, Catholics and Lutherans have the lowest divorce rate at 21 percent, according to Barna. People who attend mainstream Protestant churches have an overall divorce rate of 25 percent.

(Barna Research)

Whites are more likely to have had a divorce, at 27 percent, than African-Americans (22 percent), Hispanics (20 percent) and Asians (8 percent), Barna found.

"One of the most striking findings in our recent survey among teenagers is that when we asked them to name their top goals for the future, one of the highest-rated was to get married and have the same spouse for their entire life," Barna said.

Mismanaged conflict and negative interaction in marriage predicts both marital distress and negative effects for children.

(Gottman, 1994;Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 1997; Cowan &Cowan, 1992; and Grych & Fincham, 1990).

in

marriage, followed by children

(Stanley & Markman, 1997). But,

there is a lot of reason to believe that

what couples argue about is not as

important as how they argue .

"One in ten of the people who receive marriage guidance from Relate each year now blame the internet for their problems."

The British Snoring & Sleep Apnea Association study confirms many widely-held assumptions and says the problem causes rows and can lead to divorce.

Top 3 Reasons for Divorce

(All Preventable)

1. Lack of commitment
2. Too much conflict and arguing.
3. Infidelity.

(University of Texas study by N.D. Glenn)

Young married couples- top 3 major causes of divorce:

1. Time
2. Sex
3. Money

(Creighton University Center for

Major Causes of Divorce

- Lack of commitment
- Poor communication
- Financial problems
- Change in priorities
- Infidelity
- Failed expectations
- Unmet needs
- Addictions (substance)
- Physical, sexual, or emotional

Do people work hard to save their marriages before divorcing?

Fatherhood Today, Volume 10, Issue 3, Summer 2005 pages 4-5 by Vincent D. Caro)

Other countries report major causes of divorce as: (Sept 10, 2005, Malaysia)

1. Failure of husbands and wives in discharging their responsibilities.
2. Religious differences.
3. Cultural differences.
4. Interference by 3rd parties.
5. Sexual problems.
6. Money
7. Careers
8. 21% irresponsible attitudes
9. 19.23% incompatibility
10. Drugs & alcohol

"Having a child with poor health decreases the probability that the parents will live together by 9 to 10 percentage points" after a year to 18 months of the child's life."

("FATHER FLIGHT“ The Washington Post: "Unconventional Wisdom", Oct 10, 2004 and Nancy Reichman, pediatrics department of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey)

The prayers of counselees are problem centered

The prayers of counselors must be God-centered.

Clients want God to enter their lives at the point of most intense pain.

God wants us to enter His life at the point of most intense grace: Jesus Christ

Attempting to communicate and uphold a biblical view of marriage is a formidable challenge

Where the will to survive and flourish is lacking, human morality is helpless

In a world separated from God, the sources of guidance through life are reduced to tradition, morality, and personal choice.

Where positive influences support the survival of society and individuals, life can go along fairly smoothly until negative influences cause division and dysfunction

I still believe that the Gospel is to be proclaimed as God's absolute truth, not shared as one faith among many.

A Christian approach must be biblical.

Obedient faith in God is both rational and simple.

The Scriptures transcend all human traditions.

The Keys to a Good Marriage

- Planning
- Hard work
- God’s blessing

Some couples seem to get along better by accident than others do by design

We must have a vision for what our marriage can be

In marriage, the foundation of any action must have the benefit of the other person in mind or the over all good of the marriage.

“She Keeps Nagging Me For A New Dress!”

We should always consider the potential benefit or harm any words or actions might generate.

“I Suppose it’s a Matter of Taste, but I Like the Burnt Part Better Than the Frozen Part”

“YES. THIS IS DIAL-A-GROUCH... ONE MOMENT, PLEASE..”

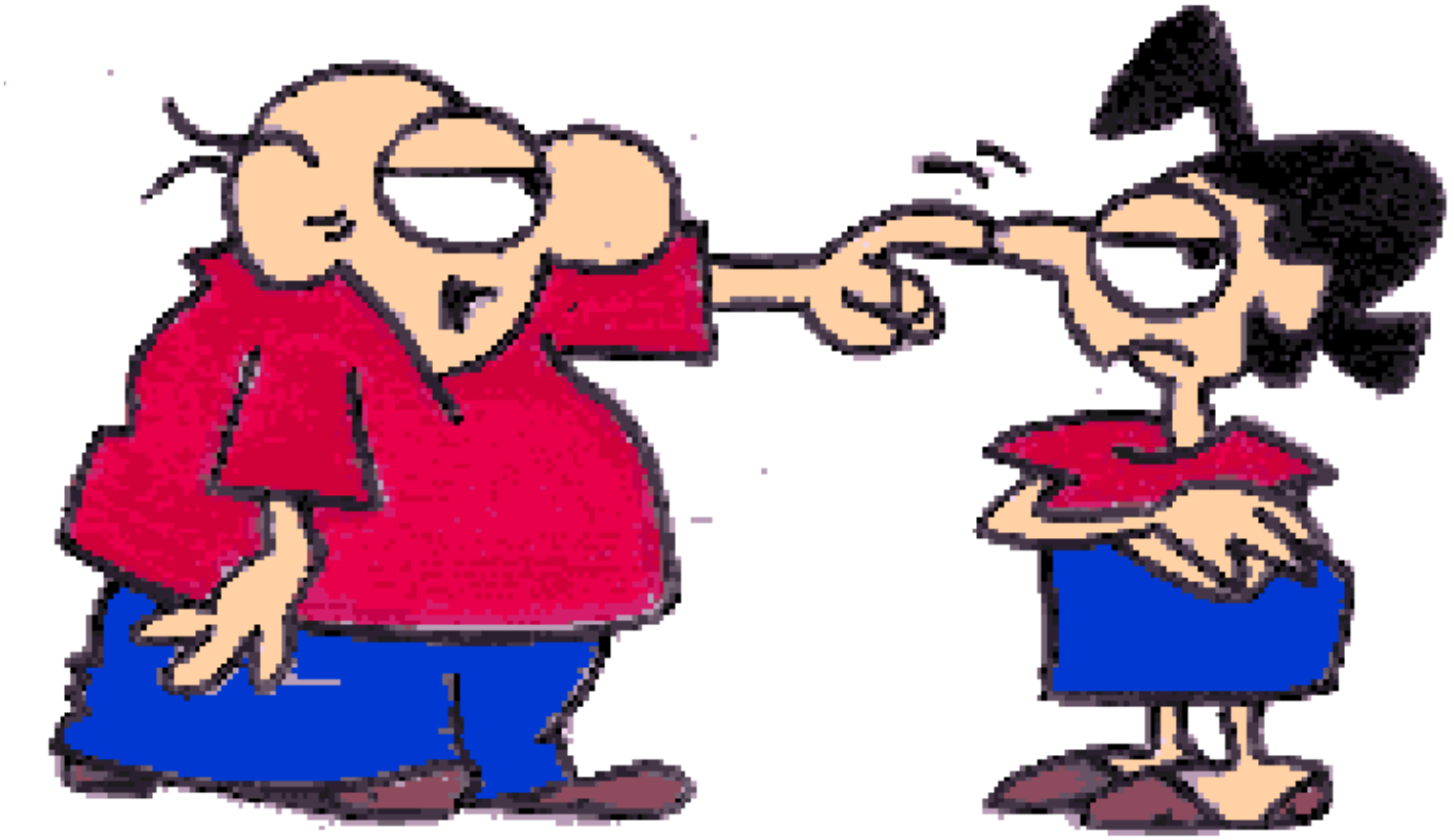
“I’M PLOTTING TO MURDER MY HUSBAND’S MISTRESS. FIRST, I’LL SAW OFF HER LEGS, THEN I’LL CUT HER CABLE AND KICK IN HER SCREEN.”

The Sequence of Sin

- Temptation
- Hesitation
- Participation

“I WAS LOOKING FOR AN IDEAL, I MARRIED AN ORDEAL, AND NOW I WANT A NEW DEAL!”

“YOU SAID I SHOULD TOUCH YOU
MORE OFTEN. HAPPY NOW?”



The Way of a Sinner is Hard

The disobedient spouse is more often than not involved with someone outside the marriage.

“THE WIFE’S VERY FUSSY ABOUT GETTING DIRT ON THE CARPET..”

Don’t fall in the trap of being outcome focused

Two Ways to Produce Change

- Manipulation
- Through Love

Two Ways to Produce Change

- Manipulation
- Through Love
  - Only the most spirit-filled Christian has the resources for such a selfless love.

It is the giving of love that produces love, not the straining to attract it

Ed Wheat, MD.

Jesus said, “It is better to give than to receive.”

“AND THE TIME HE WON A TRIP TO HAWAII FOR 2… HE WENT TWICE.”

Why Worry about a Kiss?

What would you miss
odd thing that kissing
kiss my foot I've heard
don't kiss that nerd
blow me a kiss
that one missed
a kiss on the hand
they're not in demand
the kiss of death
that's not much fun
kiss the girls
and make them run
kissing sure sounds fun
some kiss the dog ,some kiss th
some kiss the face
some kiss sincere
some kiss around
some kiss the ear
some kiss the ground
some kiss for pay
some kiss to betray
some kiss the dead

for what it’s worth
some kiss for greeting
when they are meeting
for some it’s hi
for others bye
some kiss the stranger
on the street
some kiss their mother
on the cheek
some kiss for profit
some kiss for pain
some kiss for peace
some kiss in vain
some think that kissing
is all the same
some kiss the ring
some kiss the head
some only kiss when
someone’s dead
when some are kissed
they turn so red
others simply turn their
head

So don’t let kissing worry you, don’t waste your kisses, nor save them all, give them out to great and small, pucker up and let them fly, and get your due before you die.

It is only when we get self-possessed that we become disillusioned with our marriage partner.

Four Times of Marriage Struggles

- Five year mark

THE ONLY CHANGE IS THAT WE NOW HATE YOU AS MUCH AS WE HATE EACH OTHER

“WHAT HAPPENED RUTH? YOU USED TO BE A FUN PERSON!”

Four Times of Marriage Struggles

- Five year mark
- Ten to fourteen year mark

Four Times of Marriage Struggles

- Five year mark
- Ten to fourteen year mark
- Mid-life crisis

“I’M AT THE AGE WHERE I’M SHOWING AN INTEREST IN GIRLS, AND MOM SAID MAYBE I SHOULD GIVE YOU A FEW TIPS!”

Four Types of Marriage Struggles

- Five year mark
- Ten to fourteen year mark
- Mid-life crisis

Four Types of Marriage Struggles

- Five year mark
- Ten to fourteen year mark
- Mid-life crisis
- The Empty Nest Syndrome

SEX
AFTER
60
CPR
TRAINING

On the Roof

She was rather relentless
She wouldn’t let up
She just wouldn’t quit
She wouldn’t slow down
She was mad to the bone
She pounded her fist
She pounded the floor
She yelled and she screamed
She spit and she stewed
She stammered and stuttered
and threw her shoe
I went to the roof
for some peace and joy
but she followed me there
and made so much noise
I went to the basement
and hid with the toys.

The relative health of a marriage cannot be determined by the length of it.

Motivation for Couples Coming to Counseling

“I’M WILLING TO MAKE A SINCERE EFFORT JUST TO PROVE IT WON’T WORK.”

I TOLD YOU NO ONE COULD GET ALONG WITH HER!”

Setting Up the Counseling Session

Assessment Issues

- Assessment of salvation

Assessment Issues

- Assessment of salvation
- Assessment of spiritual resources

Assessment Issues

- Assessment of salvation
- Assessment of spiritual resources
- Assessment of Bible knowledge

Assessment Issues

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- Assessment of spiritual resources
- Assessment of Bible knowledge
- Assessment of spiritual growth

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- Assessment of spiritual resources
- Assessment of Bible knowledge
- Assessment of spiritual growth
- Assessment of capacity of the couple
- Assessment of commitment of the couple

Assessment Issues

- Salvation
- Spiritual resources
- Bible knowledge
- Spiritual growth
- The capacity of the couple
- The commitment of the couple
- The nature and types of marriage problems

Assessment Issues

- Salvation
- Spiritual resources
- Bible knowledge
- Spiritual growth
- The capacity of the couple
- The commitment of the couple
- The nature and types of marriage problems
- The external resources available

Statements Not to Make

- You will never make it
- You will never make it
- They've done studies on people like you, and you won't stay married
- You should never have married
- You have absolutely no reason to stay together
- You have nothing in common
- Neither of you are marriage material

“STOP REFERRING TO OUR RECONCILIATION AS A REMATCH”

Planning Your Marriage

Planning Your Marriage

- **Spiritual Plan**

“HE’S TALKING ABOUT DADDY!”

Planning Your Marriage

- **Spiritual Plan**
  - God cares enough to communicate His love and will to mankind

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  - What parents do in moderation, children will do in excess

Planning Your Marriage

- **Spiritual Plan**
  - God cares enough to communicate His love and will to mankind
  - Don’t export anything that is not working in your life
  - What parents do in moderation, children will
    do in excess
  - Stir a hunger in your life and your family’s by establishing a spiritual plan

Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
  - Until debt do us part

Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
  - Until debt do us part
  - Do not fall for get rich quick schemes

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  - The Scriptures speak more about finances than any other subject except for love

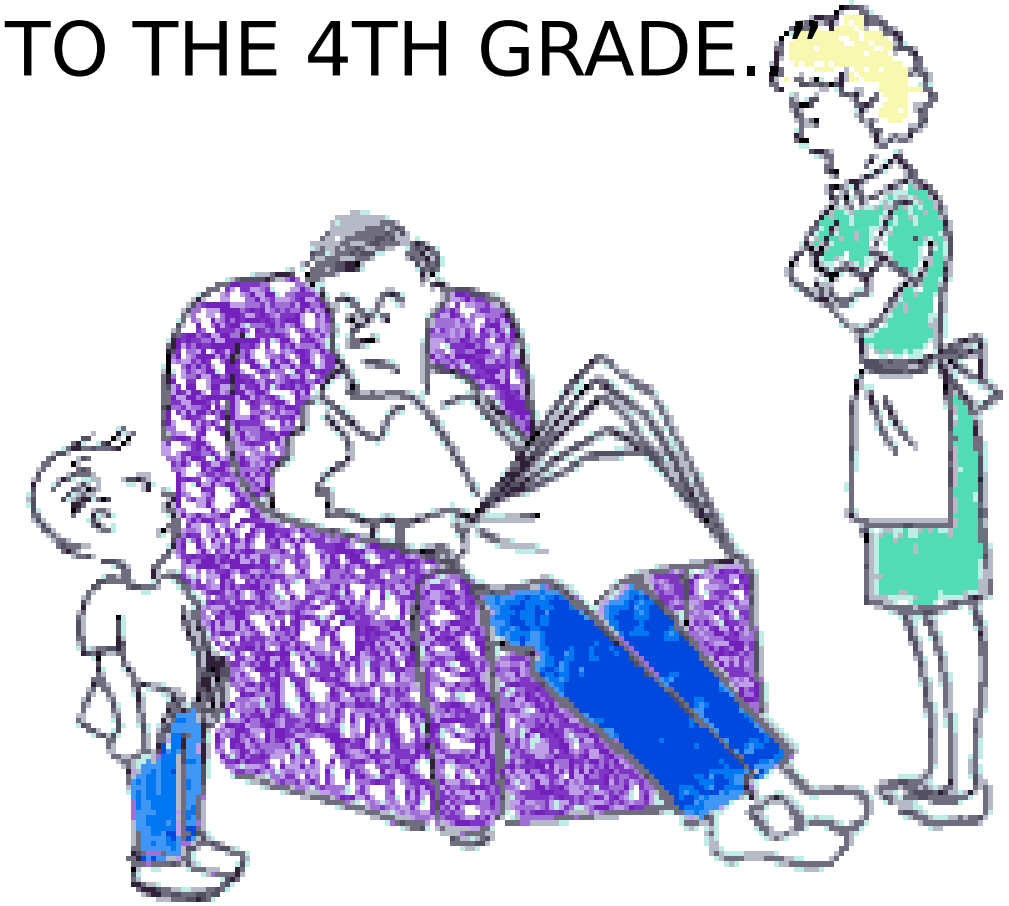
Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
  - Until debt do us part
  - Do not fall for get rich quick schemes
  - The Scriptures speak more about finances than any other subject except for love
  - God wants us to understand the principle of ownership

Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
  - We are responsible for our children's education.

HELP JUNIOR WITH HIS HOMEWORK, HARRY, WHILE YOU'RE STILL ABLE TO... NEXT YEAR, HE GOES INTO THE 4TH GRADE.



Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
  - We are responsible for our children's education.
  - Christians seem to be particularly vulnerable to "educational" rip-offs.

Planning Your Marriage

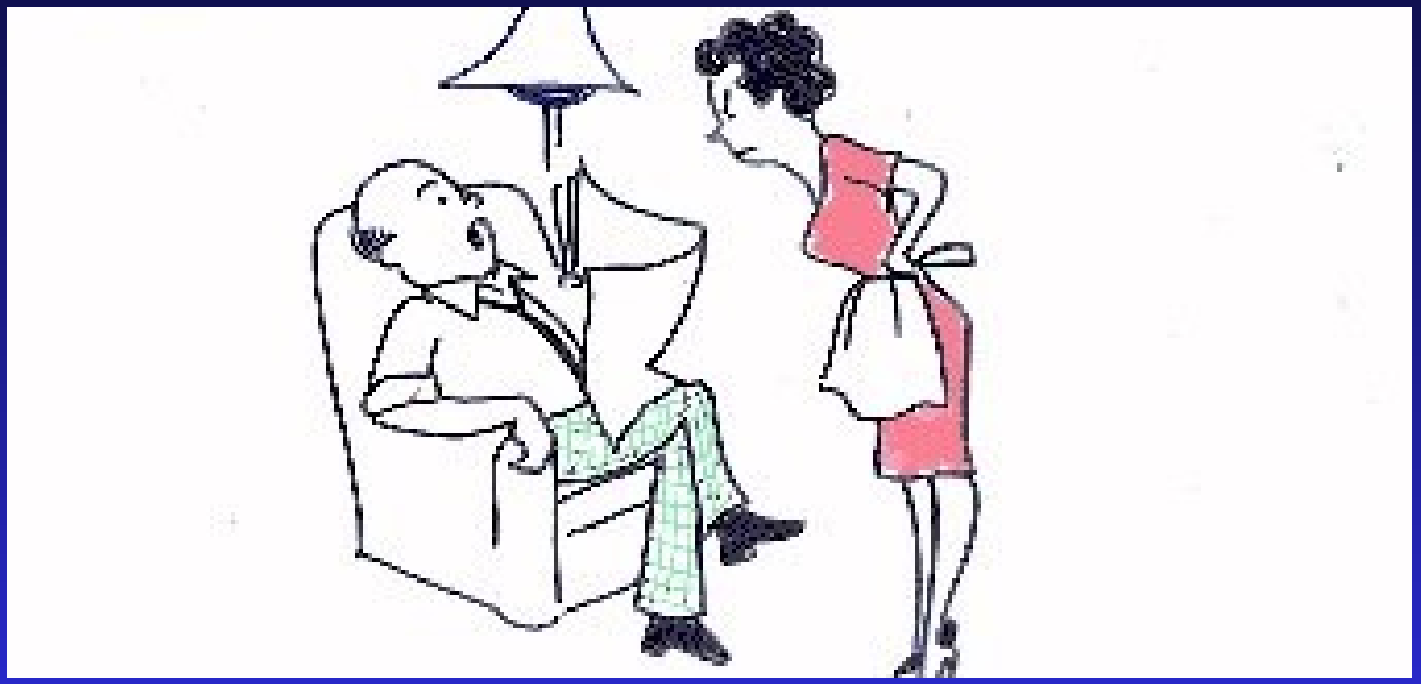
- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
  - We are responsible for our children's education.
  - Christians seem to be particularly vulnerable to "educational" rip-offs.
  - If we as Christians can't provide the best in educational facilities as our forefathers did, then we should stay away from the "playgrounds."

Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
- Family and In-law Plan

“I DON’T MAKE ALL THIS FUSS WHEN YOUR MOTHER WANTS TO COME STAY WITH US”

“WHO NEVER SAYS ANYTHING NICE ABOUT YOUR RELATIVES? I HAPPEN TO THINK YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW IS MUCH NICER THAN MINE!”



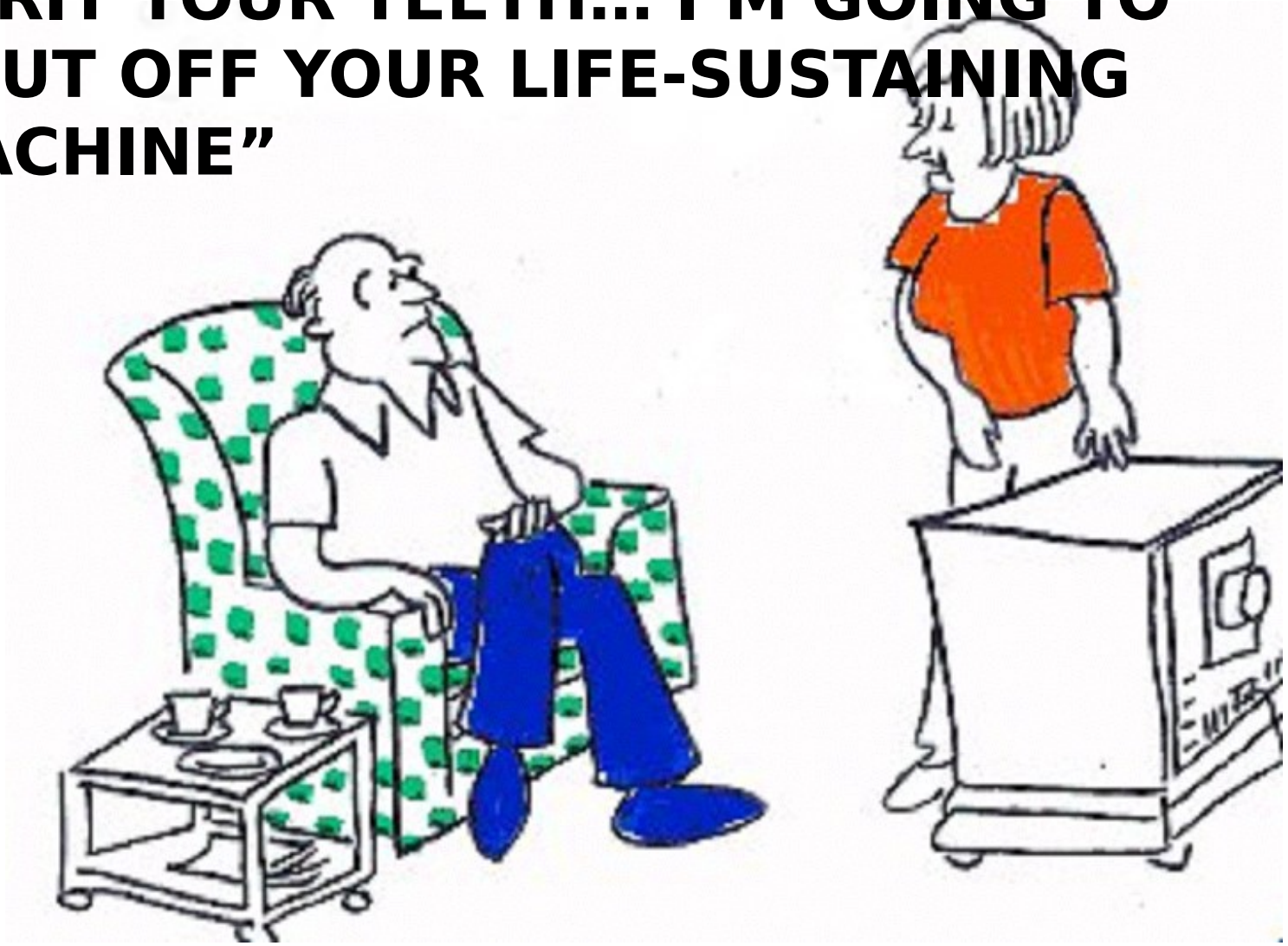
Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
- Family and In-law Plan
  - Couples should establish their own traditions

Planning Your Marriage

- Spiritual Plan
- Financial Plan
- Educational Plan
- Family and In-law Plan
- Relationship Plan
  - Cultivating a relationship—weed it and reap

“GRIT YOUR TEETH… I’M GOING TO SHUT OFF YOUR LIFE-SUSTAINING MACHINE”



“WHAT’S THE COMPLAINT?”

Homework Assignments

Five Steps in Planning Your Marriage

Every couple needs to plan. The following areas should have both a one and five year plan, and each area should be evaluated each year to revise and see how things are progressing relative to the plans you agreed upon.

Financial Plan including a one-year budget to be renegotiated at the end of the year.

Spiritual Plan such as reading through the Bible during the next year and establishing and maintaining family devotions and a prayer time.

Educational Plan both for husband and wife, and a plan for each child, including journal reading, technical manuals, workshops, etc.

Relational Plan good relationships don't just happen. They take careful planning and a spirit of willingness to spend time together on common projects, dates, and quality time without the other family members.

Recreational Plan the body is not a machine, but will malfunction if recreational time is not established on a regular basis.

Homework Assignments

Common Project Exercise

The common project exercise is designed to help couples reestablish communication over a joint work project, preferably around a household task such as: refinishing furniture, painting a room in the house, planting a garden, landscaping the yard, etc.

If you cannot agree on a common project, then put an equal amount of projects from the husband and from the wife into a jar and draw from the jar at random or agree to alternate picking the project.

Expressing Your Faults

Expressing Your Faults

Most people are in touch with their own faults. However, sometimes it seems as though our mate is not in touch with their faults. The reason for this is that we are often reluctant to express our faults to our mate even though they generally know our major weaknesses. Pride will often keep us from telling our mate our faults, but the truth is that we have learned to accept our faults, so why can't a husband or wife?

If the truth were know, most of us would like to change our faults, but because it is not like changing a flat tire, we feel hopelessly locked into a lifetime with whatever shortcomings we may have. The reality is that we can change, but not without a specific plan which includes expressing accountability. Therefore, I suggest that each mate tells their own faults to their husband or wife, and each fault should be accompanied by a specific plan of behavior for overcoming that fault.

Expressing Your Faults

Example:

Honey, one fault I have in our relationship is that I do not listen closely enough when you talk. From now on when you speak to me, I am going to stop whatever I am doing, make eye contact and physical contact with you (hold your hand and sit facing you if possible) and repeat back to you what you say, and maybe even ask a question or two if I am not sure what you are trying to say.

After many years of excusing our rationalizing our faults, it is difficult to deal honestly with them—difficult, but possible. By putting the faults in specific terms and expressing a plan for overcoming them in behavioral terms, not only will we begin to work on overcoming faults, but our mate will be able to see progress (however slowly) as we work our plan. This will give us accountability and give our mate encouragement as we make progress.

Homework Assignments

Educational Plan

If a parent does not start early to put money away, no matter how small the amount, for their children's education they will not be ready when the time comes. Yes, there are grants and loans and programs available for low-income families, but why not plan ahead as though you are not going to be a low-income family. I think to not plan ahead is to not believe in God's blessing on your behalf. Do not misunderstand me, I am not suggesting that God is obligated to bless anyone financially, nor that if a person is poor it is his or her fault. Being poor is not a disease; it is often a fact of life. But just as saving money for the future is a sign of biblical wisdom so is providing a certain portion of our children's education even if just one semester of encouragement. This is within the planning realm of most single parent's means.

It is also important that each single parent stays current in their professional field: teacher certification, teachers manuals, course work, journal reading, etc., because life is to a great extent an educational process of one type or another.

Homework Assignments

Relational Plan

Having a relationship with our children that is unique and dynamic is essential if we want to have a major impact on their lives. The key steps to any significant relationship is that we spend meaningful time together and a lot of it. Because single parents do not have very much extra time it is important to be creative in the time you do have.

If there are some long blocks of time you can spend together on the weekends, then try to get the kids up early. Perhaps sleep only an extra hour on that day off. Don't waste the entire day in bed or in cleaning the house!

It doesn't cost much money to go on a picnic, and you have to eat lunch anyway. Bike rides can also be fun and a great treat if mom or dad goes along.

Plan a "big event" beforehand with all your kids' involvement in the planning stage and talk it up during the week. For example, on a bike riding event get the old road maps out and plan the route highlighting the road with bright colors. The time spent planning will very possibly be the greatest part of the event so build it up, write it out, and let the kids catch your excitement and enthusiasm.

Homework Assignments

Recreational Plan

Every family needs to “get away” for a week or so, if at all possible, once a year. But if that seems out of the realm of possibility, then weekend getaways dispersed throughout the year are also very effective.

The idea is to plan a family vacation together. The cost is not important but the commitment to build lasting memories of a godly family having fun together is important.

Whether you choose camping, fishing, or swimming in the Holiday Inn pool - plan for a great time and make it special.

Ideas for Recreational Activities

1. Common Project Exercise
2. Jar Exercise
3. Dating Exercise
4. Sporting Events
    A. Jogging
    B. Swimming
    C. Dancercise, Aerobics
    D. Tennis
    E. Racquetball
    F. Golf
    G. Walks
    H. Bike riding
    I. Scuba diving
    J. Mountain climbing
    K. Back-packing
    L. Horseback riding

Ideas for Recreational Activities

5. Church Activities
    - A. Teaching Sunday School together
    - B. Sponsoring a youth group
    - C. Serve in Missions
        1. Letter writing
        2. Keeping up with needs on field
        3. Going on short term mission trips
    - D. Having couples over for Sunday dinners
    - E. Sponsoring special events; ice cream socials, picnics, or watermelon busts
    - F. Home Bible Study
    - G. Vacation Bible School

Ideas for Recreational Activities

6. Community Involvement
    A. Local club involvement
    B. Local government involvement
    C. School P.T.A. or board involvement
    D. Activist involvement
        1. Pro-life involvement
        2. Anti-pornography work
        3. Anti-sodomite
7. Taking college courses together
8. Community Bible study together

Do not start any new activities or become involved in any new issues without spousal involvement. Drop all activities that take you out of relationship with your mate with
the exception of one or two that are not all consuming.

Family Planning Calendar

Since planning to a great extent determines our outcome in the family relationship, it makes good practical sense to plan weekend activities together as a family. Six month planning with some flexibility is strongly encouraged. This will allow a family to sit down twice a year and plan the activities for the next six-month period. Such planning builds toward the future, solidifies our commitment, and gives us short-range events to look forward to and talk about. Remember that most families are extremely busy so do not be discouraged if some of the activities are already “planned,” but be innovative and build a future around specific calendar planning.

Jar Exercise

Find two jars and place them on your respective dressers. On Sunday night place five slips of paper into your mate's jar with one need you have written on each slip of paper. The needs should be more of a personal nature, rather than a "honey do" list.

Examples: 1. I need you to hold me 15 minutes before you leave for work this morning.

2. I would like to have 30 minutes to relax after I get home tonight before I am asked to do anything.

If a "honey do" really meets a specific need, okay, but try to limit the exercise to needs of a personal nature.

Each day, Monday through Friday, one need is pulled out in the morning and fulfilled before bedtime so make sure the need can be fulfilled in one day.

Dating Exercise

The dating exercise has three rules as well as some general guidelines.

The **rules** are as follows:

1. Alternate choosing the place that you think your mate would like to go - it doesn't have to cost mega-bucks.
2. Go alone together. Do not go out with or visit friends and relatives.
3. No arguments - not about past issues, current "hot" issues, or future potential issues.

The general **guidelines** are:

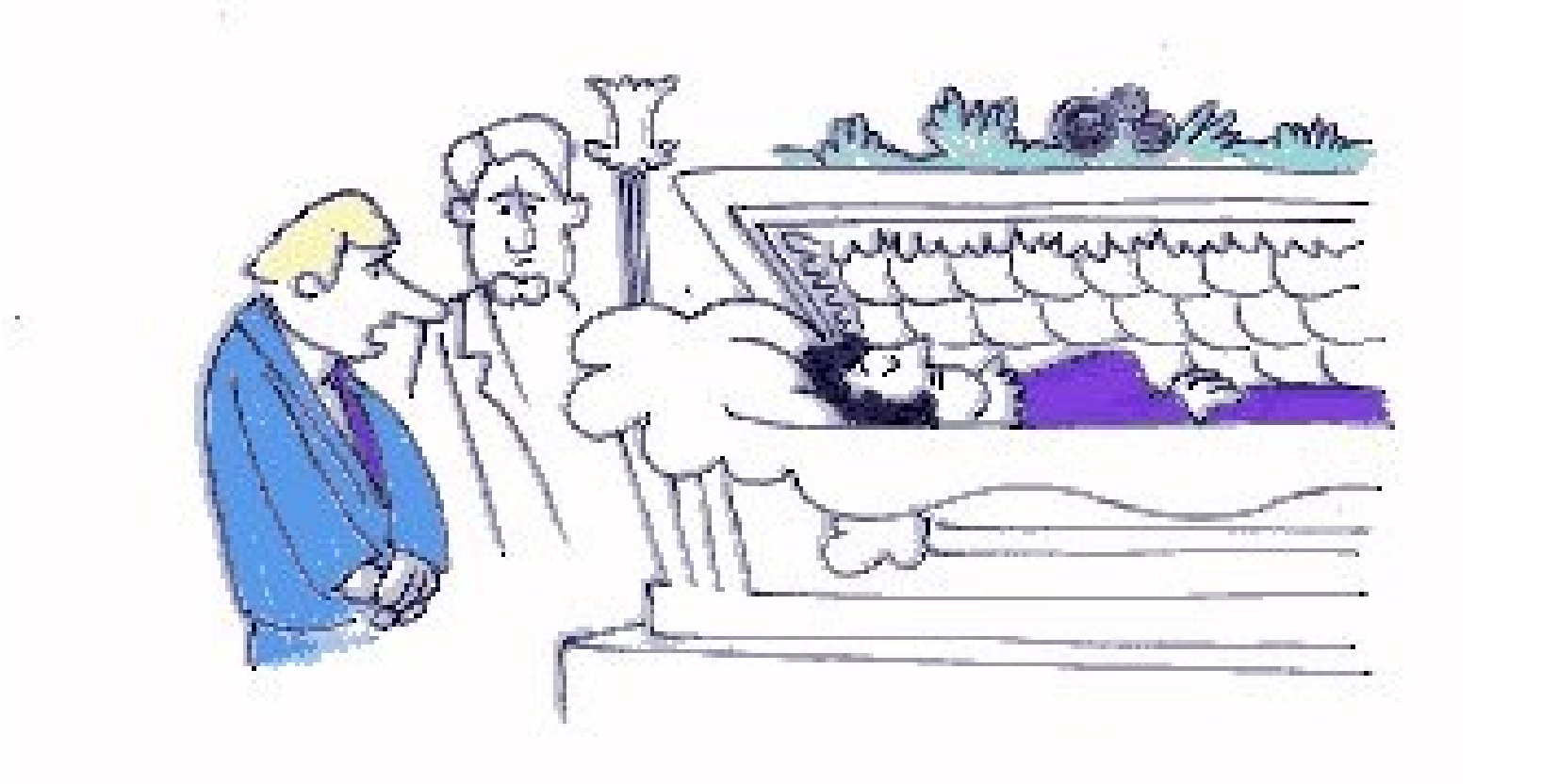
1. Dress for the occasion, as if you would if you were trying to impress your
   first date.
2. Treat your mate as you would a first date you were trying to win.
3. The date should include eye contact, physical closeness, and building conversation to be a positive experience.
4. Keep your date out a little longer than you think her parents would
   appreciate. Expressing your fault exercise.

Faults exercise

Developing the Communication Skill Required of Marriage

- Listening
- Taking Serious
- Trying to Understand

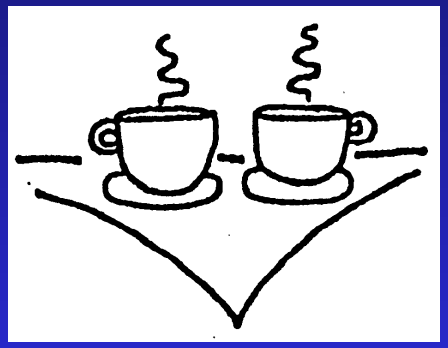
“SHE’S SO LIFE-LIKE... STILL NOT SPEAKING TO ME.”



Conversation

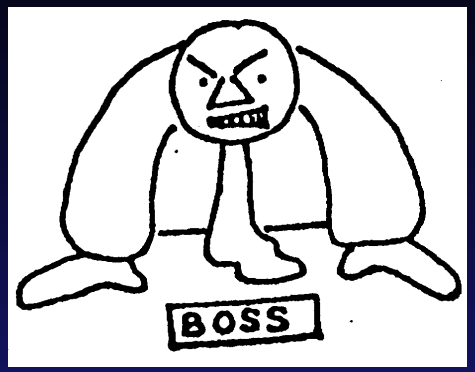
The art of clear conversation is a vital ingredient in any relationship. It is important to hear and be heard in an effective way. But effective conversation does not come naturally. It is a skill to be learned and practiced.

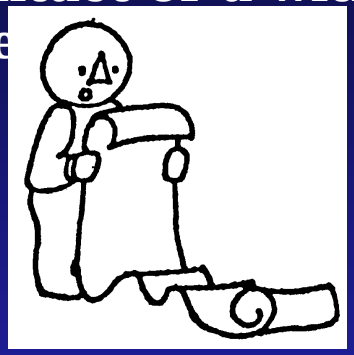
The Informal Chat is simple information passing and gathering.



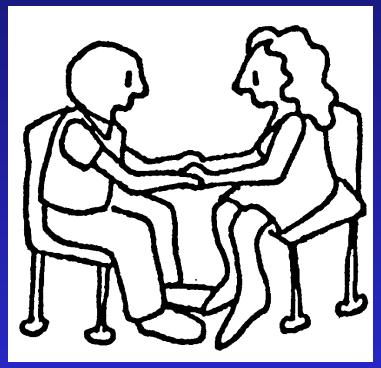
Conversation

The Power Talk is demanding, controlling with tone, the choice of words, the content, and non-verbal cues. There may be threatening eye contact or a withholding of eye





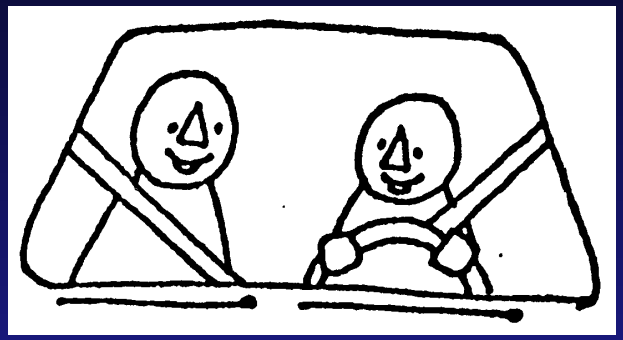
Communication of Intention is a straightforward delivery of thoughts, feelings, and plans.

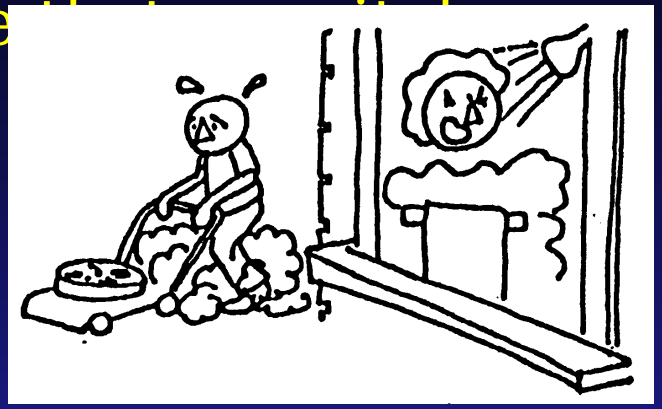


Serious Talk is the deepest level of communication. It is problem solving, exploring depths of a relationship, exploring commitments.

Elements of Conversation

Effective conversation involves several simple elements. Here are three

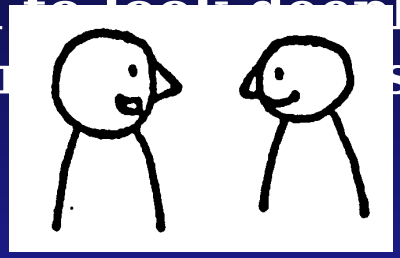


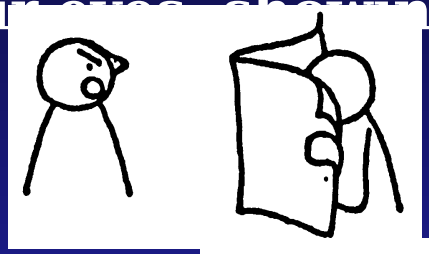


Physical Proximity – Being in the same room is the minimum requirement for effective conversation. Shouting across the house can be misinterpreted and may impede the conversation process. Intercom, walkie-talkies, or telephone should be used for any greater distances. Letter writing, e-mail, and face-to-face internet can make for effective conversation, but leaves out the extra meanings that come with expressions from body, face, and voice.

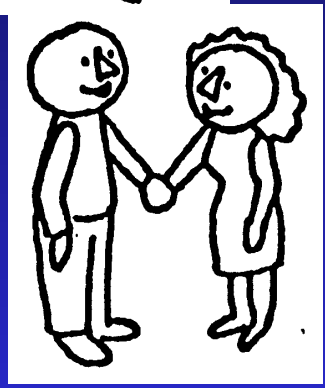
Elements of Conversation

Eye Contact – This says that the listener is giving full and undivided attention. This affirms the speaker's value to the listener and communicates that the listener's heart is "open and ready for business." Looking into a person's right eye will allow you to look deeply into their eyes, showing respect and listening.





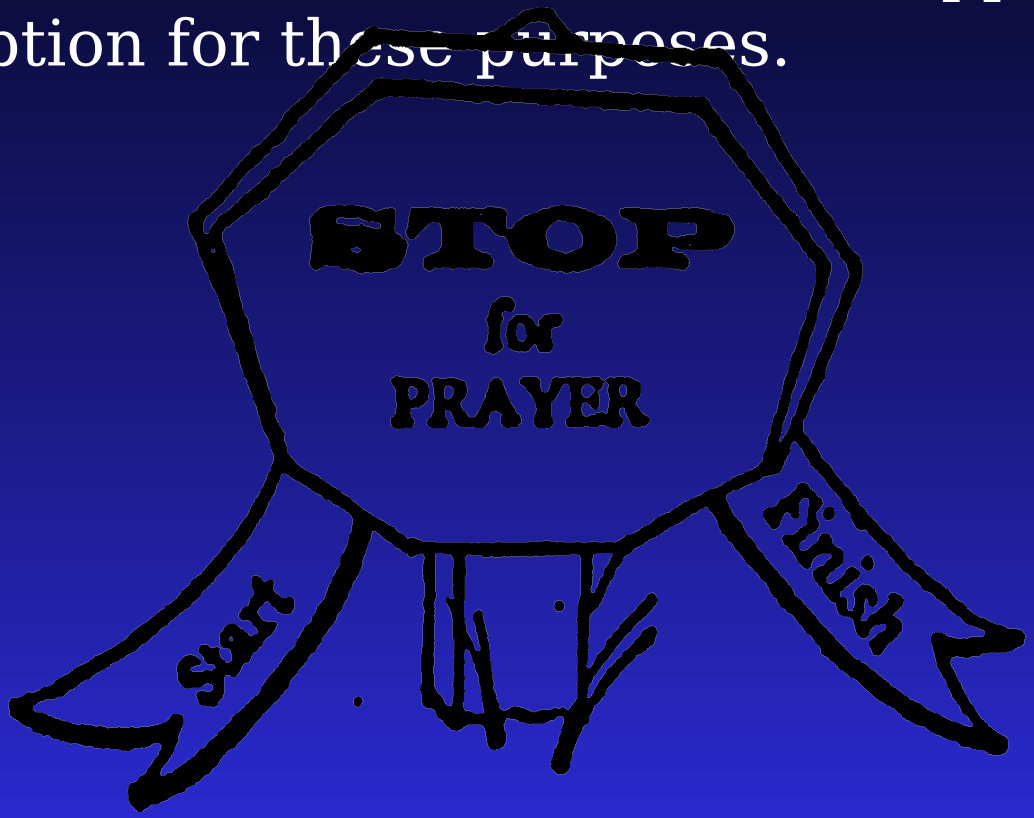
Physical Contact – This indicates safety, encouragement, and team spirit. We recommend that all conversation between spouses or family members begin with a touch, a squeeze, a hug, etc. Holding hands in prayer is a must when embarking on difficult, delicate topics of conversation.



The Conversation Map

The Stop Signs

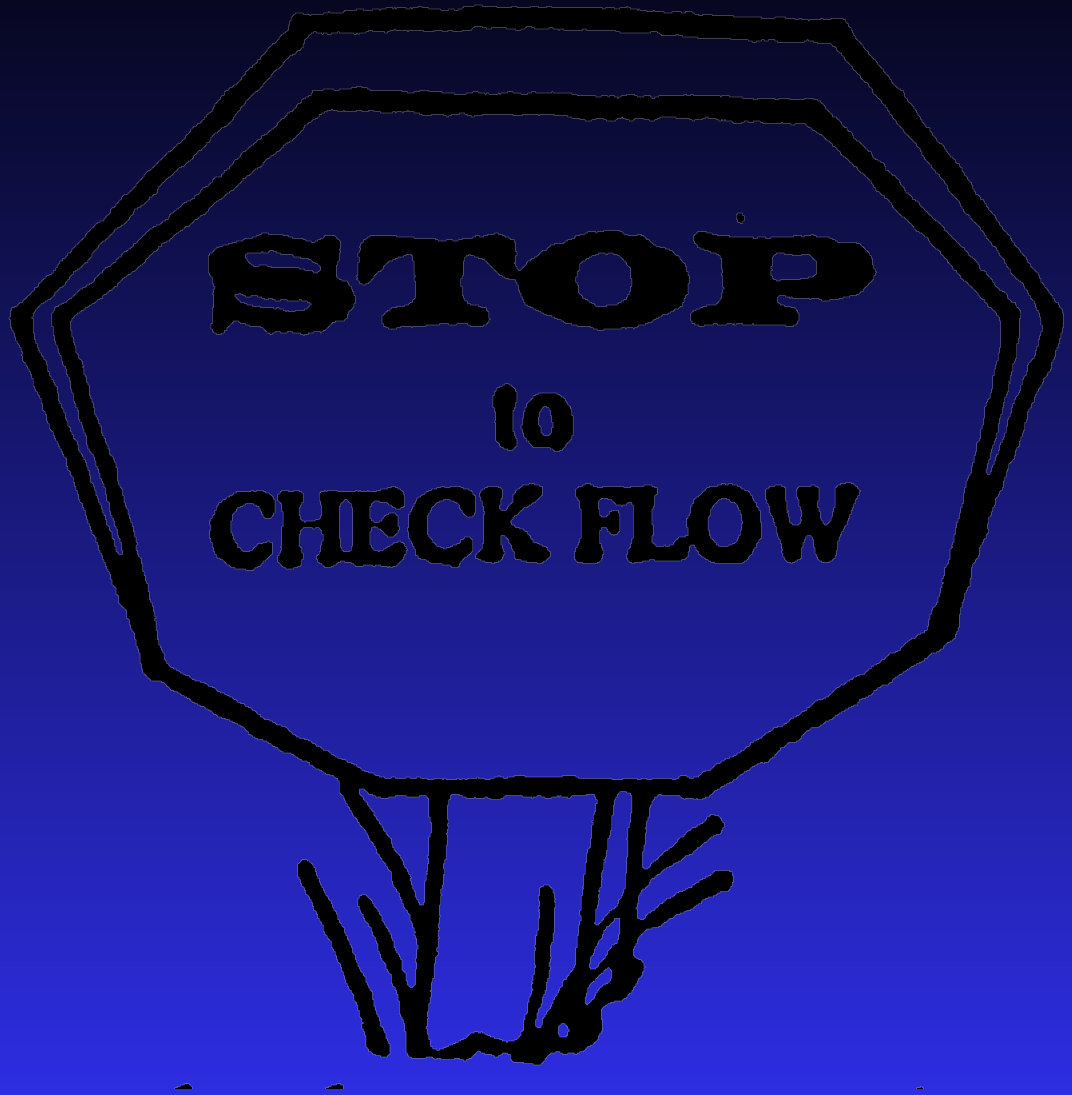
There are four “Stop” signs. Speaker and listener both are able to call for an appropriate interruption for these purposes.



The Stop Signs

The Stop Signs

The Stop Signs



Which Side Are You On?

One side the the Map is for the lead speaker for this conversation. This would be the person who initiates the conversation who has something to say and a need to be heard. This person had four steppingstones to walk through the topic.

Positive Affirmation – Start with a personal word to your listener. There is a reason you chose this person to speak to. Affirm their importance in your life. Out of nearly 7 billion people on this planet, you chose this person to converse with. Mention several positive things about them, totally unrelated to the issue at hand.

Topic of Concern – State the topic in one positive sentence. Try to make a sentence that reflects hope. An example would be, “I want us to work together and plan our summer vacation.”

Which Side Are You On?

My Contribution	Begin with your thoughts and feelings about the topic. Then give your observations and interpretations. Finish by including any conclusions you may have derived about the topic.
My Hope	Conclude with statements about your hope…for the listener, for yourself, and for your relationship together.

Which Side Are You On?

Now let’s look at the listener's side of the Map. The listener also has four steppingstones on the other side of the Map. These steps are to help focus on the speaker.

Active Listening

Give the speaker serious regard. Try to understand. Take into account everything you already know about the speaker and this topic. Do not automatically discount what the speaker is saying. Use good eye contact, look in the right eye, and use physical touch if it is appropriate with your marriage partner.

Careful Reflection

This is the first check for alignment, making sure you heard what the speaker said. It is an opportunity to not just mimic the speaker, but restate what you heard the speaker say, in your own words, as closely to the speaker’s content as possible. Reflect on the speaker’s observations, thoughts, feelings, and hopes. This gives the speaker the opportunity to affirm or correct the understanding so far. Refrain from responding from your heart just yet.

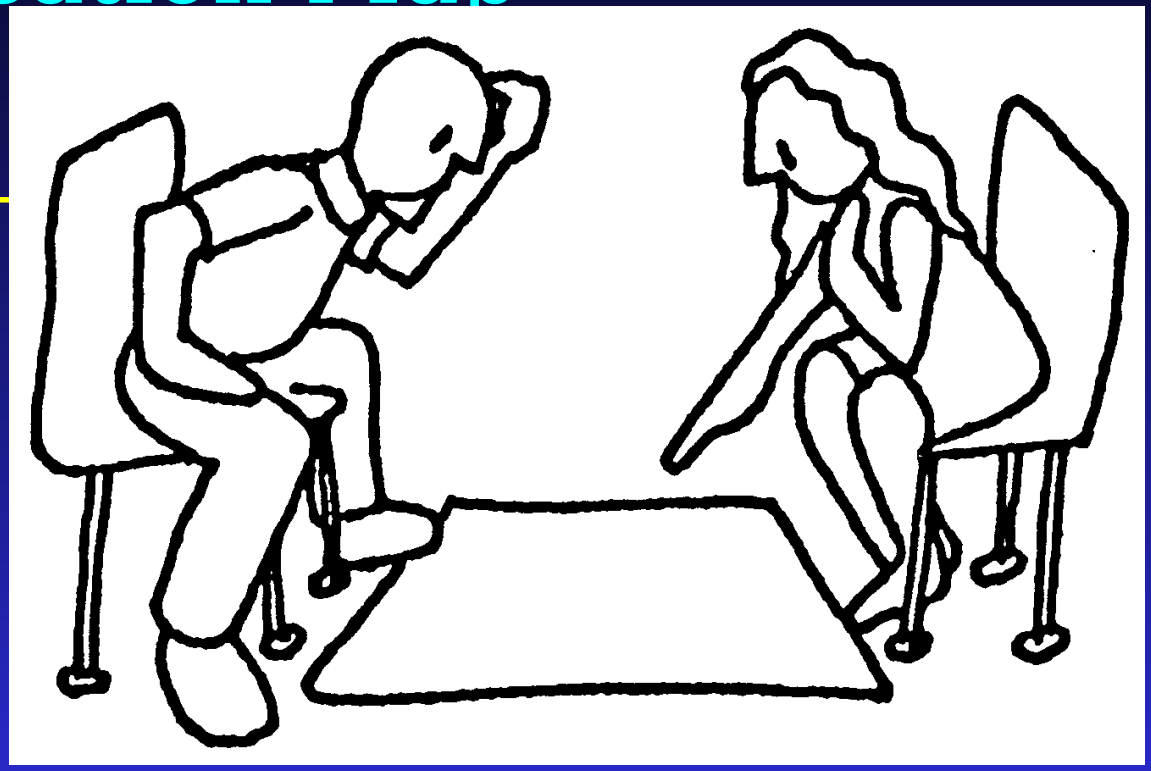
Which Side Are You On?

Tender Questions	Careful information gathering. This is the second check for alignment, making sure we know enough about an issue to go into a problem-solving modality. You are trying to understand the topic fully. Ask open-ended questions, inviting more than yes/no answers. Do not try to trip up the speaker. "Just the facts, ma'am." You are trying to get more information, so problem-solving can take place and cover the exact issue discussed.
Sweet Responses	Give words of pleasant affirmation. Appreciate their bringing the topic to your attention.

Phase I

Process for Using the Conversation Map

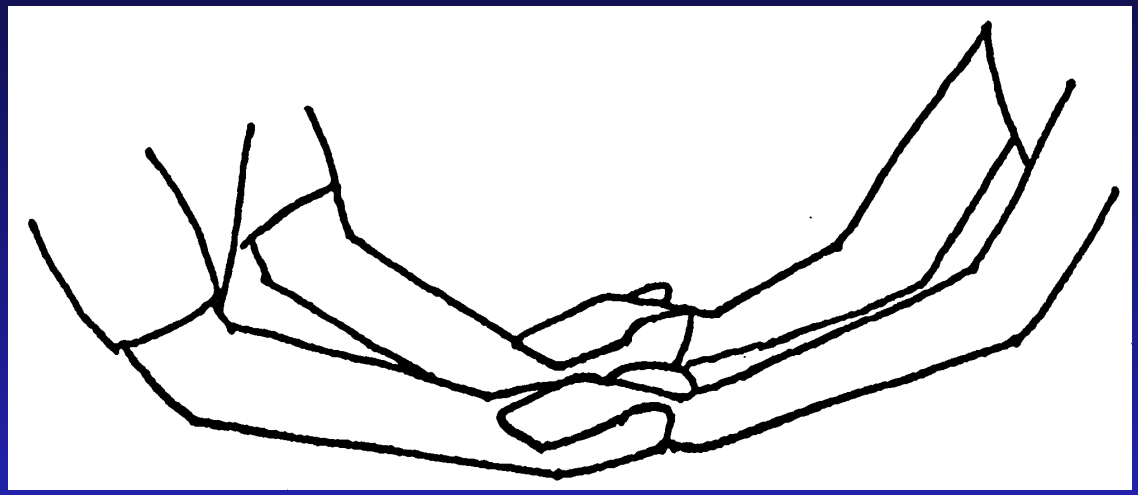
Step 1



Phase I

Process for Using the Conversation Map

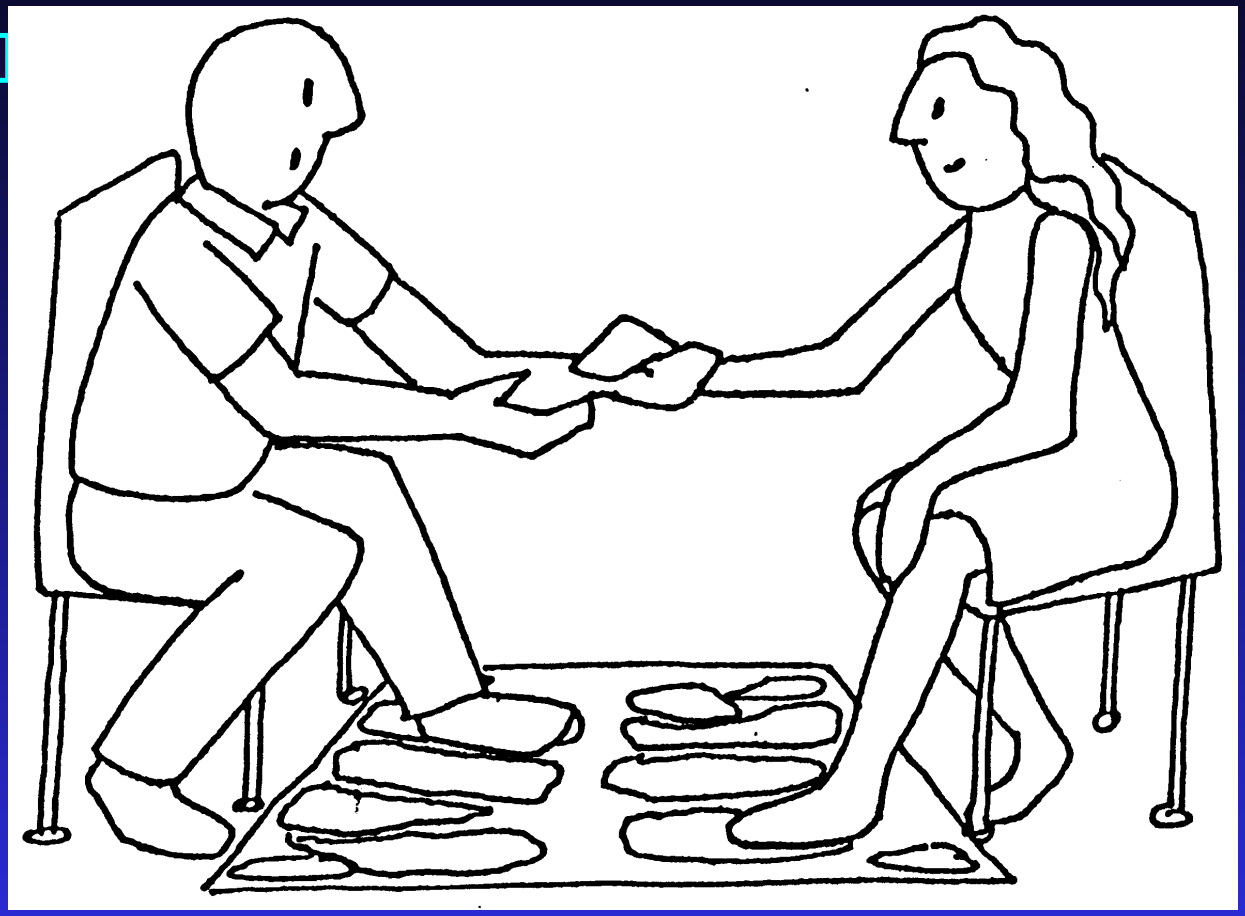
Step 2



Phase I

Process for Using the Conver

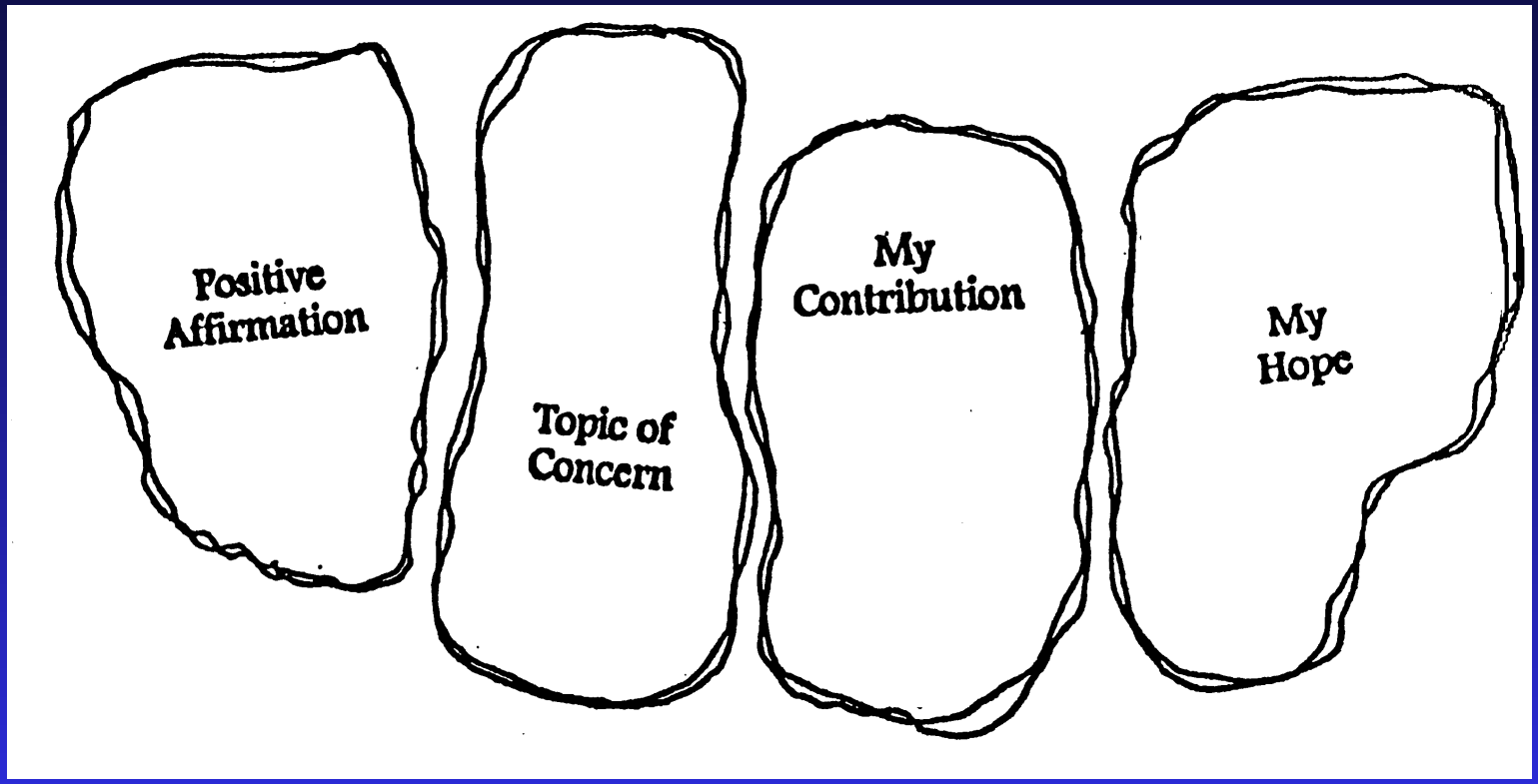
Step 3



Phase I

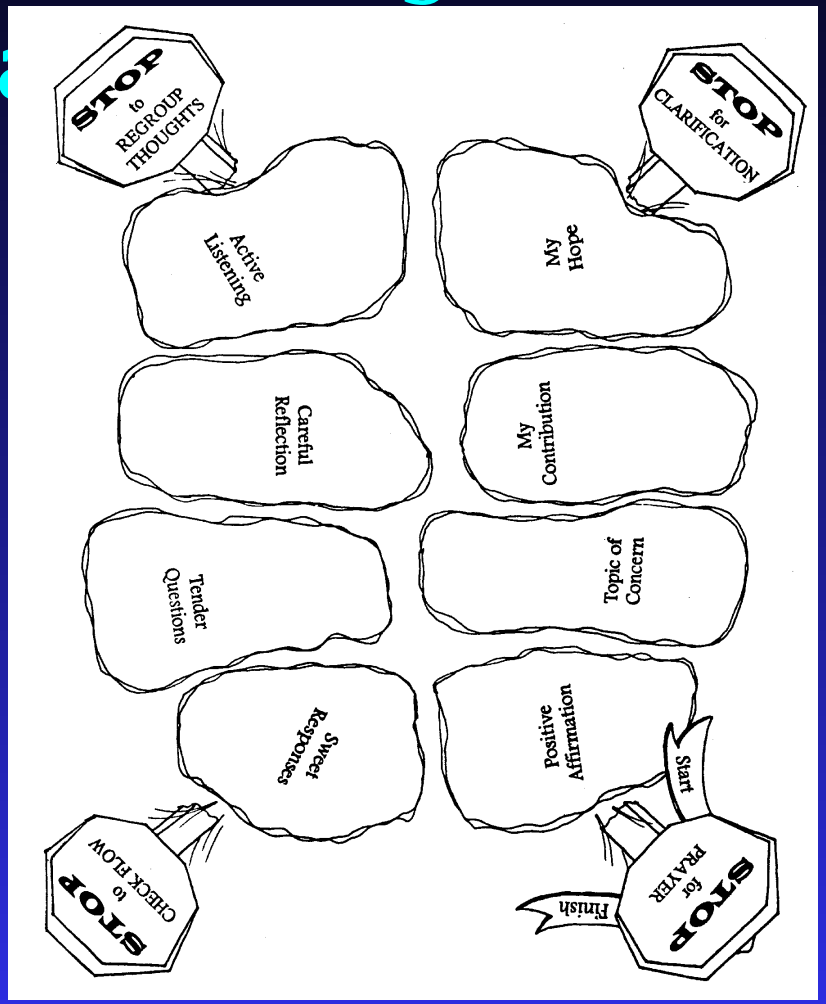
Process for Using the Conversation Map

Steps 4-6



Phase I

Process for Using the Conversa



Phase II

Conflict Resolution

- Define
- Covenant
- Generate potential solutions
- Prioritize
- Present lists
- Compromise
- Initiate
- Explore
- Offer hope
- Evaluate

How do we approach people?

Closing the Session

- The old saying, “if you don’t know where you are going any road will do” will not do for biblical counselors.
- The road to by-and-by leads to the house of never.